

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 308064

FOL TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO BANGKOK BERLIN KUALA LUMPUR
MANILA MOSCOW JAKARTA SINGAPORE TAIPEI TOKYO PEKING CINCPAC
FROM RANGOON DTD 17 DEC 1976 QTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 4079

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XC, UR, GE, JA

SUBJ: SRV AND THE SOVIET ORBIT

REF: (A) BANGKOK 33160, (B) SINGAPORE 5473, (C) RANGOON 2391

SUMMARY: IT IS SOMETIMES ASSUMED THAT THE SRV IS NOT IN THE SOVIET
ORBIT, BUT IN DANGER OF ALLING INTO IT, AND NEEDS FOREIGN (EXPECIALLY
U.S.) ECONOMIC AID TO KEEP ITSELF OUT OF SOVIET CLUTCHES. THIS IS IN
EFFECT CONTRADICTED BY THE GDR AMBASSADOR IN RANGOON WHO SAYS THAT
THE

CURRENT PRO-SOVIET ORIENTATION OF THE SRV IS SATISFACTORY TO THE
SOVIETS; HE ALSO IMPLIES THAT THE GDR AND SOVIETS WOULD BE NOT UN-
HAPPY TO SEE U.S. RECOGNITION OF AND ECONOMIC AID TO THE SRV. I
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THINK THE U.S. SHOULD DECIDE WHTTHER AND HOW MUCH TO AID THE SRV
ON THE BASIS OF GENERALLY APPLICABLE CRITERIA FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOP-
MENT ASSISTANCE; AND WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE THE SRV WHENEVER IT IS
WILLING TO ACCPT RECOGNITION UNCONDITIONALLY. END SUMMARY:

1. AT A RECENT CONFERENCE AT BANGKOK OF JAPANESE CHIEFS OF MISSION

IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, AND AGAIN IN A CONVERSATION I HAD WITH HIM HERE ON DECEMBER 9, JAPANESE DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER KEISUKE ARITA MADE A CASE FOR PROMPT US RECOGNITION OF AND AID TO THE SRV AS A MEANS OF HELPING IT KEEP ITSELF OUT OF THE SOVIET ORBIT. THIS RATIONALE NECESSARILY IMPLIES THAT VIETNAM IS NOT NOW IN THE SOVIET ORBIT, AND THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD LIKE TO BRING IT INTO THEIR ORBIT. IT WOULD ALSO BE A LOGICAL INFERENCE FROM ARITA'S RATIONALE THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD NOT LIKE TO SEE THE U.S. UNDERTAKE A COURSE OF ACTION (I.E., RECOGNITION AND AID) THAT WAS LIKELY TO KEEP VIETNAM OUT OF THEIR ORBIT.

2. GDR AMBASSADOR SEIGFRIED KUEHNEL, ABLEST AND MOST APPROACH-ABLE OF THE EASTERN EUROPEAN DIPLOMATS IN RANGOON, AND A CLOSE CONFIDANT OF THE SRV'S REPRESENTATIVE, SAYS THAT WHILE THE SRV IS NOT ANTI-PRC, IT DEFINITELY PREFERS "OUR WAY--THE GDR AND SOVIET WAY--OF DOING THINGS" OVER THE CHINESE WAY, "WHICH WE DO NOT REGARD AS REAL SOCIALISM". IN SEVERAL SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS OVER A SPAN OF ABOUT A YEAR, KUEHNEL HAS MAINTAINED THAT THE SOVIETS ARE SOPHISTICATED ENOUGH TO REALIZE THAT THE BEST DEFENSE AGAINST THE SPREAD OF CHINESE INFLUENCE FURTHER SOUTH INTO SEA IS A PROSPERING, SUCCEEDING, AND PEACEABLE VIETNAM, WITH A CREDIBLE DEGREE OF INDEPENDENCE. ON OCCASION, KUEHNEL HAS SUGGESTED THE DESIRABILITY OF THE UNITED STATES FURTHERING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUCH A PEACE-LOVING VIETNAM.

3. COMMENT: I HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT ARITA'S RATIONALE (WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE AND AID VIETNAM TO KEEP IT OUT OF SOVIET CLUTCHES) IS AIMED PRIMARILY AT MAKING A CASE FOR CONTINUED ACTIVE U.S. INVOLVEMENT
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IN THE AFFAIRS -- NOT NECESSARILY THE SECURITY AFFAIRS -- OF SOUTHEAST ASIA, RATHER THAN REPRESENTING THE CONCLUSION OF AN OBJECTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SRV-PRC-USSR RELATIONSHIP. PERSONALLY, I THINK THE JAPANESE ARE PROBABLY RIGHT TO BE UNEASY ABOUT THE IMPLICATION OF TOO RAPID OR COMPLETE A DISENGAGEMENT BY THE U.S. FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA, ESPECIALLY IN ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL, AND PERHAPS POLITICAL MATTERS. HOWEVER, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE KEEP ENGAGED, IF WE DO, FOR THE RIGHT REASONS. WE SHOULD CONSIDER AIDING A PEACEABLE VIETNAM ON THE BASIS OF THE SAME SORT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTAL AND HUMANITARIAN CRITERIA APPLICABLE TO AID PROGRAMS ELSEWHERE, AND NOT WITH ANY IDEA OF PROTECTING IT FROM SOVIET INFLUENCE. BY THE SAME TOKEN, THE FACT THAT U.S. RECOGNITION OF THE SRV MIGHT BE REGARDED FAVORABLY BY THE USSR FROM THE STANDPOINT OF ITS GOAL OF "CONTAINING" CHINA SHOULD NOT DETER US FROM RECOGNIZING THE SRV, WHEN AND IF IT IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT RECOGNITION UNCONDITIONALLY.
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